

and the black pimps wear broadbrims  
and I'm known in the neighborhood  
nobody bothers me  
and I like the taco stand on the corner  
and the newsboy on the corner  
who looks like Peter Falk.  
I can see the "Hollywood" sign  
on the mountain  
and I walk the streets in the  
late afternoons  
dressed in bluejeans and a  
black t-shirt.  
it's warm and easy and there's  
not much to do.  
the black whores take up most  
of the tables at the STAR BURGER  
and I walk past ZODY'S  
carrying a 6 inch  
switchblade in my  
pocket.

#### THE IMAGE

he sits in the chair across from me,  
"you look healthy," he says in a voice that is  
almost discouraged.

"3 bottles of white German wine each night,"  
I tell him.

"are you going to let people know?" he  
asks. he walks to the refrigerator and opens  
the door: "all these vitamins...."

"thiamine-hcl," I say, "b-2, choline, b-6, folic  
acid, zinc, e, b-12, niacin, calcium, magnesium,  
a-e complex, paba ... and 3 bottles of white  
German wine each night ...."

"what's this stuff in the jars on the sink?" he  
asks.

"herbs," I tell him, "golden seal, sweet basil,  
alfalfa, mint, mu, lemon grass, rose hips, papaya,  
gotu cola, clover, comfrey, fennugreek, sassafras  
and chamoline ... and I drink spring water, mineral  
water and 3 bottles of German white wine ...."

"are you going to let people know?"  
he asks.

"know what?" I ask. "I eat nothing that walks on  
4 legs and I'm not a cannibal and kangaroos and  
monkeys are out ...."

"I mean," he says, "people thought you were a tough guy ...."

"oh," I say, "I am ...."

"but how about your image?" he asks. "people don't expect you to be like this ...."

"I know," I say, "I've lost my beer-gut. I've come down from 44 to 38, I've lost 21 pounds ...."

"I mean," he goes on, "that you represented a man walking carelessly and bravely into death, foolishly but with style ... like Don Quixote, the windmills ...."

"don't tell anybody," I answer, "and maybe we can save the image or at least prolong it ...."

"you'll be going to God next," he says.

"my god," I say, "is 3 bottles of ...."

"all right," he interrupts, "I suppose it's all right."

"I still fuck," I say, "and I play the horses and I like to go to the boxing matches and I still love my daughter and I almost love my present girlfriend, maybe I even do ...."

"all right," he says, "can you give me a ride back to my car?"

"all right," I say, "I still drive cars."

I lock the door and we go down the walk toward my car.

AND MY MOTHER HAD A NICE UMBRELLA AND  
LOOKED BEAUTIFUL AND FUNNY IN THE RAIN ....

right now I think my car can use a good wax job. and some day I'd like to go to Madrid. and like many people I tried suicide once and failed. no, I tried twice and failed, and I also saved one man and one woman from suicide. it's almost boring isn't it?: how we go about doing these things and then forget them and sit in a chair, eating an apple and reading a newspaper, or taking a bath and washing under the armpits.